

# HARP OF MY HEART

## AND OTHER POEMS

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BY

HUGH ROBERT ORR









# HARP OF MY HEART

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BY  
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DESIGNS BY  
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To One  
Who Lives in Memory  
And One  
Who Remains to Read

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HARP OF MY HEART



## Harp Of My Heart, Waken

Harp of my heart, waken to the winds that come tempting  
you to song;

The thirsting winds that come with eager fingers tipping up  
the wine cups of the flowers;

That hasten out to gather up the incense of the fields and  
run in revelry over the hills spilling it as they go.

Will they not pause at the door of my heart? Must they  
be fleeing forever away in their discontent?

Perhaps they are like a poet and all their life is but a cry  
and a thirst, as of one who wanders alone through the  
high star-candled chambers of the night seeking the brim-  
ming chalice of the infinite.

Harp of my heart, waken to the voices in the wind that  
come tempting you to song;

That come with the delicate uncertainty of fingers feeling  
for the keys of some half-remembered melody.

## On Pinnacles Of Wonder

I ask no certain passport,  
Although I journey far,  
Only the gold of morning,  
Only the evening star.

Though there are those who answer  
My questions thus and so,  
And tremble in believing,  
Fearing what they know --

I have no fears and doubtings,  
Nor any creeds to boast,  
For I bide most in wonder,  
In all I question most.

And when men weep and falter  
Because their dreams are dust,  
On pinnacles of wonder  
I build my tower of trust.



## Oh, To Set Joy Loose Over The Earth!

Oh, to set joy loose over the earth,  
To give what the whole world is seeking!  
Joy of dreams and of freedoms and self-masteries,  
Of being equal with the highest and the lowest in the earth,  
Joy with a pang deeper than pain.  
Oh, to squeeze the full red drops out of the grapes of life  
and to give the whole world to quaff it!

Going out to sing of joy, and to find it falling from the lips  
of laughing children;  
To see joy in the faces of uncursed men, to hear it in the  
shoutings of liberated races;  
Returning to find my own heart joy-lit as by a thousand  
candles pouring their whole white radiance into one small  
room.

Oh, still to sing of joy!  
Joy made free for all and set within the reach of all,  
Joy like the molten gold of morning pouring over the hills  
and down across the valleys --  
Oh, to set joy loose over the earth!

## July Night

A gentle peace  
Hath hushed the tired world;  
The fields where men have toiled  
Lie in a silver silence,  
And the rutted road  
Is paved with moonlight.  
In their stalls  
The cattle breathe content;  
A loon cries from the river fens.  
Orion, golden-girdled,  
Guards the Pleiades;  
The night winds sleep.  
No one is near but God --  
And a muttering owl in a tree.



## Until Today

Until today I thought  
Your years were never fraught  
    With cloud or rain;  
Though nothing you have said,  
Today upon your lips I've read  
    Long silenced pain.

Until today I guessed  
Your undulating breast  
    Sang fearlessly;  
But now within your song  
I hear your heart beat out its long,  
    Long agony.

I thought some radiant dream  
Fell on your eyes, some gleam  
    Of sunlit years;  
But now today I know  
It is the wistful afterglow  
    Of tears.



## Long Ere The Dawn

Long ere the dawn  
A man arose and walked alone  
Upon the hills.  
The stars knew him --  
In Syria the stars speak unto men.  
The breath of aloes washed in dew  
Came up the slope;  
He drank it in and paused  
As the first waking bird  
Shattered the silence with a song.  
Then waited he and watched,  
Erect, full-powered,  
His face turned toward the east,  
Expectant, eager, held,  
As at a world's nativity.

## Autumn Fantasy

Deep-dyed ivy flaming over an old fence wall;

Sunlight stepping on dry leaves and running away leaving  
golden foot-prints on the hills;

Cloud fragments floating like dream-ships silent and un-  
deterred unto some far port of fantasy --

And this is autumn, this golden coronation of the year, this  
forest carnival of color with crimson streamers flying  
down the leafy colonades.

Over the fields a limpid haze lies softly undulating in the  
breeze. Everywhere a deep hush of joy is turned into  
dreaming. The very air hangs trembling on the brink of  
melody.

What is autumn? What is this configuration wrought in  
sunlight?

May be it is a mystic spell cast upon the fields by the  
magic of the golden-rod.

Or perhaps it is where some youthful deity fell and spilled  
his cornucopia, hasting home from the harvest of the gods.

I guess it is joy come into the heart of the earth with the  
long embrace and the kisses of the summer sun.

## There Came A Song

There came a song soft falling on the night,  
As from an upper air above the din  
Of midnight traffic in the city streets.  
Far from some many storied height a voice  
Came floating down as wafted autumn leaves  
That fall upon a worn and weary soil  
And quicken it to life. So fell that song  
From some sweet unknown lips upon my heart  
And I forgot for one deep moment all  
The whirl of motors, and the thundering trains,  
A moment only--but a part, it seemed,  
Of some sublime antiphony that swelled  
Through the cathedral of the starlit night.

## Hour That Never Failed

Swift years that march upon us,  
New years like unspent armies thundering at our doors,  
Do you see how fragile are our walls, how rusted are the  
    long-kept bars?  
Have you come, O years, to take us by storm if we will  
    not yield?  
Do you speak long with our unwilling minds? Do you plead  
    with our stubbornness?  
Do you offer compromises that you may not need to destroy  
    us utterly?  
O marshalling years, solemnly approaching, giving us time  
    to open the gates to your peaceful entry,  
How long will your patience hold you from devastation?  
Omnipotent years, amassing against us blinded by our frag-  
    ile barricades,  
Is the hour come near, the hour that never failed?  
Do we hear strange sounds less distant?  
Do we hear new voices?  
Do we see resistance swept aside?  
Do we see rising upon the ruins new states and new capitols,  
Amlagimations and fraternities?  
A new world and a new flag rising over humanity?  
O years that march upon us!  
O our blind eyes!  
O fragile barricades!  
O hour that never failed!

## They Softly Walk

They are not gone who pass  
Beyond the clasp of hand,  
Out from the strong embrace.  
They are but come so close  
We need not grope with hands,  
Nor look to see, nor try  
To catch the sound of feet.  
They have put off their shoes  
Softly to walk by day  
Within our thoughts, to tread  
At night our dream-led paths  
Of sleep.

They are not lost who find  
The sunset gate, the goal  
Of all their faithful years.  
Not lost are they who reach  
The summit of their climb,  
The peak above the clouds  
And storms. They are not lost  
Who find the light of sun  
And stars and God.

They are not dead who live  
In hearts they leave behind.  
In those whom they have blessed  
They live a life again,  
And shall live through the years  
Eternal life, and grow  
Each day more beautiful,  
As time declares their good,  
Forgets the rest and proves  
Their immortality.

## Anastasia

What dream has brought you from your east,  
Daughter of Plato, child of Greece,  
In Smyrna born where Plato lived?  
What vision roused you at your play,  
Where blue Aegean waters lave  
Their sunlit sands? What whispered word  
Came unto you from out the sea,  
Telling into your childhood ears  
The secret that your ancient king,  
Not knowing, sat and wept to know?  
What mighty voice without, within,  
Spake to your maiden heart that you  
Should rise and leave your Homer's haunts  
Your Athens and Acropolis,  
Your glorified Thermoplae?  
I ask you, child of graceful Greece,  
What message spake the gods to you,  
That you were bold to leave your play,  
That you sailed fearless on the sea,  
That you came hither unafraid,  
Unto my land of restless toil,  
Unto my city wrapped in smoke?  
Is it that your long cultured sense  
Sees beauty where I see it not?

## Bring Unto Me A Little Child

Bring unto me a little child,  
That I may look on life  
Honest and undefiled by trothless guile,  
Unshrouded by the forgeries of time.  
The trivial clamor of the street  
Has deadened all my song;  
Oh, let me hear some little voice that laughs  
And chatters sacrilegiously  
Among our graven images!  
Bring unto me a little child  
That neither worships, fears nor hates,  
But only laughs,  
That I may set my heart attune  
To heaven's voice.



## Babylon

O dust of Marduk, dead, wind-driven dust,  
Time swept thee as the tide an house of sand,  
Time took thy pride and left thee to the moles;  
In vain for thee the writing and the hand.

For Babylon is fallen like a star,  
That leaves its place unmarked against the sky;  
Bel-Merodach is gone, his priests are dust  
Whereon the sleeping sun-warmed serpents lie.

Men tramp thy grave to Bagdad knowing not  
The glory of thy day, O Babylon;  
They hear no song of Sargon's victories,  
Nor echo from the train of Xerxes' throng.

No voice is heard where once thy captives wept,  
And hung their harps beside thy willowed stream;  
O Babylon, thou art more dumb than they,  
And nothing lives but their immortal dream!

## Song Of Wonders

Wonder of suns and seasons,  
Of sowing and reaping;  
Wonder of spheres in perfect accord,  
And of deep and limitless spaces;  
Wonder of birth and of death,  
And of life proceeding;  
Wonder of love and laughter,  
Of music and of song;  
Wonder of dreams and fulfillment;  
Wonder of pain and tears;  
Wonder of day-break and of noon,  
Wonder of evening star;  
Wonder of all that is--  
Wonder that anything is.  
Oh, wonder that I may behold it all  
In wonder!

## The Prophet

They will not hear a prophet's voice;  
"Away", they cry, "To Golgotha!"  
And crown him there with martyrdom.  
His living voice now stilled, his word  
Is caught up by the echoing hills  
And flung afar to every age,  
While children strew wild-flowers for him  
Their fathers flayed and cursed and killed.

No sweeter sadness than is his  
Whose ear hath caught the sounds afar,  
Whose eye hath seen the distant day,  
Whose soul hath sensed the wider law.  
He knows no country, but two worlds,  
The old one passing for the new;  
He goes, a solitary soul  
Along his way unto the end,  
A liberator, to his chains.

Ere good hath ever conquered ill,  
Ere ever night hath turned to day,  
Or waters sweet were ever struck  
From rigid stones, or barren sands  
Have borne the blossom of the rose,  
A prophet's tears have there been shed.

## The Isles Of Shoals

What gods have held high carnival  
 Upon these cliffs? What revelries  
 Have riven these mighty rocks and cleft  
 This Siren's Grotto where the sea  
 Hath sung a thousand centuries?  
 What monumented arrogance  
 Or valors of some primal world  
 Have here been marked? Yet run the winds,  
 Yet fling the waves their silver surf  
 To grace these treacherous shoals. The gods  
 Have long departed, yet remain  
 Their high and hoary altars kept  
 Forever by the great white gulls  
 That skim the emerald sea.

## The Victory

Ah Christ, and who are these that have come up  
Out of the fields of blood, these maimed and blind,  
These dumb that come so slowly back again,  
With sightless sockets turned up to the sun?  
Are these they who but yesterday marched off  
To music sweet as heaven; who went out  
To beautify a world with arts of hell?

And who are these that come not back again,  
Sown to the winds of war they did not make,  
Paying the price of hatreds not their own?  
Could Abraham spare Isaac for a ram,  
And yet our sons must die for rich men's sheep?  
Come, priests of Nabob, come you patrioteers,  
And say, by God, if this be victory!

O sunken eyes, O faces smote by fire,  
O weeping hearts that wait eternity,  
O dead, sleep and forget, for at the dawn  
The wrath of God and your avenger come!

## Litany Of Night

Come, great calm beautiful night,  
Smooth out the wrinkles of the care-worn day.  
All day the horizon baffles me;  
There is no room to wander  
In the pathway of a dream.  
A mere creature of a place  
Am I in the day,  
Hurrying to and fro, to and fro,  
Even as the beetles do--  
I as busy with living as the beetles,  
I in my little thralldom busy  
Rattling the tinware of living.  
But the night, the calm far-spreading night!  
Then the curtain canopy of the day falls back  
And reveals the star-spangled universe.  
And I-- I am detached, free, ageless;  
I am become a denizen of the infinite;  
I wander where the eternities are.

## Shaggy Old Cottonwoods

Shaggy old cottonwoods,  
With your naked white arms  
Thrust up at the prairie sky,  
And your sleeping shadows stretched  
Upon the soft gray dust of the road,  
I never could understand you,  
You are so old and grizzled and profound.

Once a man with a sun-bronzed face  
Came out into the west;  
Came with a yoke of oxen and a plow,  
Came with a faith that would stagger fate--  
That is how you happened to be here,  
Shaggy old cottonwoods.

And now the bleaching years  
Of half a century  
Have left the bones of the oxen  
Whitening in the grass.  
The plow lies old and rusted  
In a fence corner yonder,  
And the man with the bronzed face--  
Well, only the old-timers remember him.

Shaggy old cottonwoods,  
You stand there so serene, unmoved,  
I never could understand you,  
You are so old and grizzled and profound.

## When Memory Turns Back The Page

How glad our hearts when we were young,  
Before the storms of many years  
Had bent us low or ever flung  
Us on a ragged reef of fears.

Ah, happy youthful days of dreams,  
When we were not so grave or wise;  
No heaven can surpass, it seems,  
The heaven that behind us lies.

Perhaps this is our heaven that brings  
To us our childlike heart again;  
That we may love anew the things  
Our toilsome years had counted vain.

For somehow at the touch of age,  
We walk again our childhood ways,  
While memory turns back the page,  
And reads to us of other days.



## A Voice For The Dumb

"Come, poet, read us gentle rhymes,"  
They say, "Sing not of toil and pain,  
Sing not the weeping nor the rain,  
Nor the oppressions of our times--"

Speak unto us of glorious things,  
How ancient serfdoms fell, the fame  
Of old-time valors, not the blame  
Of present woes and sufferings."

The poet silences his song,  
His only song, a broken cry  
For those who dream and drudge and die,  
Subdued to tyrannies of wrong.

But on the night sad voices come,  
A sound of weeping in the wind--  
"Touch thou our eyes for we are blind,  
Be thou our voice for we are dumb."

## Dear Heart, Should You Forget

Dear heart, if you should ever once forget  
My love for you,  
The stars would tell you in the night  
As they pass through.

I think the winds would cry across the fields  
To you for me,  
When they return from minstrelsies  
On land and sea.

In every flower you would find a hint,  
And you would weep,  
When you beheld the bleeding-heart  
Close at your feet.

## I Sing The Liberation

In the long night of the ages I have sung one song.

And for answer there have come back to me the sleepless  
murmurings of unfed children, and the sigh of the heavy-  
laden like the sob of the wandering winds.

In their darkness my song was of the morning. When they  
have hoped I have promised them the dawn.

Yet I well know it is not for them but for their children's  
children. Well I know that their tired bodies shall faint  
and fall, and that yet other millions shall struggle and  
fall after them.


But liberation shall come and the slaves of the night shall  
become the freemen of the day.

Now the gloom and the sadness, the wide-eyed hunger of  
children, and the laden bodies of slaves.

But tomorrow the florid dawn, child laughter, and the faces  
of unscourged men.

Now the night and my artless chantings falling upon the  
the heavy-hearted world as tears of rain from a softly  
weeping sky.

But tomorrow a radiant earth, and a singer with a harp of  
gold!



## Daybreak

Daybreak--  
The morning bells,  
And the sunlight  
Pouring its floral offering upon me.  
The world is born again,  
And men, unawed,  
Attend its new nativity.  
Yet always for me the day-dawn,  
The perfumed breath of the morning,  
And communings of life universal.

Who are you of wan face  
At your morning devotions?  
Disrobe your soul of its cloister vestments;  
Then come and join me in my song,  
Where the dew crystals drip  
From the kiss of the morning light.



## Lincoln

Born to the simple life, son of the soil,  
He knew the travail of men's hearts, the toil  
That turns the wilderness a fruitful field,  
The pioneer's fervid faith, the hopes that yield  
The far fulfillment of the prophet's dream.  
He trod the dust, yet saw the stars that gleam.  
By all that made men weep he was made sad,  
In all their love and laughter he was glad.  
He was ordained to set the captive free,  
Proclaim the day of God and liberty,  
To save a world and on his cross apart,  
Forgiving all, to bear a broken heart.  
Fallen and dead, he is come forth to stand  
A living Christ in our wide western land.

## To Pray

To pray-- not ask an alms of fate,  
Nor beg, nor placate, but to learn  
My mastery, to gain myself,  
For this is prayer.

To pray-- not toward the earth or sky,  
But to lift up unyielding hands  
To that strong life unmeasured yet,  
The God in me.

To pray-- not for the gain of it,  
But for the joy of it. To laugh,  
To weep with God, in sharing joys  
And griefs of men.

To pray-- to hope, to strive, and fail;  
And then when all is lost but prayer,  
O heart of mine, to pray again,  
And so be strong!

## There Is A Commerce

There is a commerce with the land of dreams,  
Where wealth uncounted is, and Croesus seems  
A beggar; whence a shapely argosy  
Sails far upon enchanted seas and brings  
A cargo vast of uncreated things--  
Inventions, poems and new worlds to be.  
Out from the land of dreams a mystic spell  
Has fallen on man's soul. He cannot tell  
Why he should hope, or pray or yet believe  
In truer creeds and deeds, a better land,  
Utopia that ever near at hand  
Has given him vast visions to achieve.  
Change stretches her impartial hand afar,  
Removes the hills into the sea; the star  
Of long millenniums has lost its beams;  
Yet this remaineth-- faith in what shall be  
When the creative soul of man is free  
To hold high commerce with the land of dreams.



## Apart From You

Apart from you, I hear the winds  
Go tunelessly all day;  
And all the tarrying night the stars  
Gaze wonderingly.

Apart from you, the minstrel hills  
Lean mute against the sky;  
The golden crocus looks not up  
As I pass by.



## Till I Forget

Not that I have no tears to give for them,  
Whose foot-falls break no more my silences;  
Not that my peace hath less of secret pain  
Than the great cry that went up yesterday  
Out of my heart. Not that the arguments  
One spoke who came and left a little tract  
Can solace me. It is myself at last  
Who have passed on into another world  
Of sweet rememberings. The happy years  
Come back, the dear dead days return,  
Bringing their old-time loves again to me.  
I have come nigh to those who calmly wait  
Where paths of memory have rendezvous.  
The years have made them not less mine today;  
I know those that I knew; those I have loved,  
Dear God, I love them still. Till I forget--  
So nigh they seem in memory's trysting hour--  
Till I forget how they were once so dear,  
My dead and loved are living unto me.

## As God Is To Me

God to me is as the sea  
To the spray, sparkling, free,  
Flung an instant in the air,  
Catching rainbow colors there  
From the golden sun.

As the organ to the key,  
So, it seems, is God to me;  
As the wind-harp to each string,  
When the breeze goes loitering,  
Or the strong winds run.

God to me is as the rose  
To the petals that uncloseth  
In a beauty not their own,  
Into beauty not alone  
But together-- one.

## Apocalypse Of Pain

You ask me why I weep?  
Not for the pain I bear but that I see,  
The anguish of a friend, a lone one's grief,  
For tears of little children uncaressed  
And bruised like dust-choked flowers,  
Where beats the traffic of a thoughtless world.

Why do I weep?  
For those sad ones that go as shadows  
On the earth, dry eyed, too tired to weep,  
Whose pain is measured not in sobs  
But in the silent and relentless years.

You ask me why I weep?  
Ah me, for those who have not wept,  
Whose evanescent lamp denies the stars,  
Who have not fathomed love through loss.  
I give these tears for those who never knew  
The apocalypse of pain,  
Or whom the fateful waves have never flung  
Upon a crying night-bound shore,  
Where only are the wind and rain and God.

## O Destined Heart

Hush, heart of mine,  
The winds go not at will;  
The cycles of the years repeat  
Their vain un-meaning masquerade.  
What shall avail thy song?  
The atoms have their single course,  
The winds and waves and years are kept--  
Peace heart, be dumb.

Yet flings thy song  
Its answer to the stars;  
Yet heaven calls to thee and will not pass.  
Prayers rise unbidden;  
Beauty moves thy depths  
As the full moon the sea.  
Tides, years and dreams,  
And over all one high decree--  
So comes thy song,  
O destined heart of mine.

## Nigh To The Evening Star

Oh beautiful beneath the open skies  
To sleep and the returning birds to sing  
Beside me their perennial lullabys  
With each returning spring.

To sleep-- my lamp, the evening star, hung low--  
Nigh to some clover field a-bloom in May,  
And over me a roving breeze to blow  
Its incense night and day.

Peace of the hills is mine, and shattering storm;  
I have found beauty, the divine desire;  
Attended the nativity of morn;  
Out-lived a sunset's fire.

Enough to live but for a day, a year--  
It matters not, if only there be light  
Upon the gold-rimmed hills and some hand near  
To touch my eyes with sight.

To walk the path with those who laugh, who weep;  
To dream a dream and follow it afar;  
At nightfall near some fragrant field to sleep,  
Nigh to the evening star.

## Worship

I worship all the brave--  
Not only heroes named on printed page,  
Not only those paid well and lauded most.  
I worship those brave hearts who never knew  
The glamor and the glare of fortune's fame,  
And yet toil on in their unhonored place,  
With steadfast purpose and with humble faith  
That honest toil and justice save the race.

I worship all the fair--  
All-glorious Mazda, ruler of the day,  
The white moon and the dancing stars of night,  
All beauty both in man and in the earth,  
The crimson billows of the sunset sky,  
The hills, the fields the song of forest trees,  
The winter's snow, the rain, the fragrant breeze  
That brings the scent of soft green sod in spring.  
The flowers that fringe my path, they hem God's robe;  
I reach my hand to touch and am made whole.



## Free At Last

O sovereign self,  
And free at last!  
Broken the bars  
That bruised thy beating wings.  
Cleaving the sky, oh high,  
Oh higher lift thee  
Over the fawning serfdoms of the world  
To where awaits for thee thy diadem  
Of stars all rubicund.  
None shall command thee now,  
Save that decree of heaven  
Which lifts the tide and swings the distant sphere.  
Let him, who must,  
Lay down his neck  
For kings or states to step upon;  
Let him lick dust until the day  
His soul shall wake in him  
And set him free,  
To run as run the unkept winds,  
Listing as God lists.

## Go Not Alone

Go not as one alone, dear heart,  
Uncomforted when I depart.  
You still shall find me loitering  
Where woodland echoes faintly ring,  
Where softly slumbering forest leaves  
Are wakened by the whispering breeze.  
I shall be tarrying for you where  
The wild white rose embalms the air,  
Or gathering the golden-rod  
Upon the sun-swept hills of God.



## The Unfulfilled

It is the deed that lacks,  
Nor quite fulfills  
The glory of the dream.  
Dawn writes in gold  
Some promise on the hills  
That nightfall finds half done.  
Beauty draws nigh and leaves  
Her burning kiss upon our eyes  
Until we leap to fashioning  
Some gift for gods.  
Yet awkward hands  
Shape crudely the reluctant clay,  
Or blot the canvas,  
Or discord the keys.  
So fair the gleam that leads  
Where feet can scarcely tread;  
So small the deed--  
Yet still I have the dream,  
I have the dream!



## Anticipation

I can not call the old days best,  
Nor covet youthful dreams. All things  
Once mute to me now have a voice,  
And every silence sings.

The paths so often trod become  
More beautiful as they grow old;  
The autumn leaves are deeper red,  
The sunsets have more gold.

I think tomorrow I shall hear  
A yet unheard diviner strain;  
Or find some naked half-blown flower,  
Born of an April rain.

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